Exceeding Expectations

the claw

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Young Lady Tigers Excel In '15 Season

the claw

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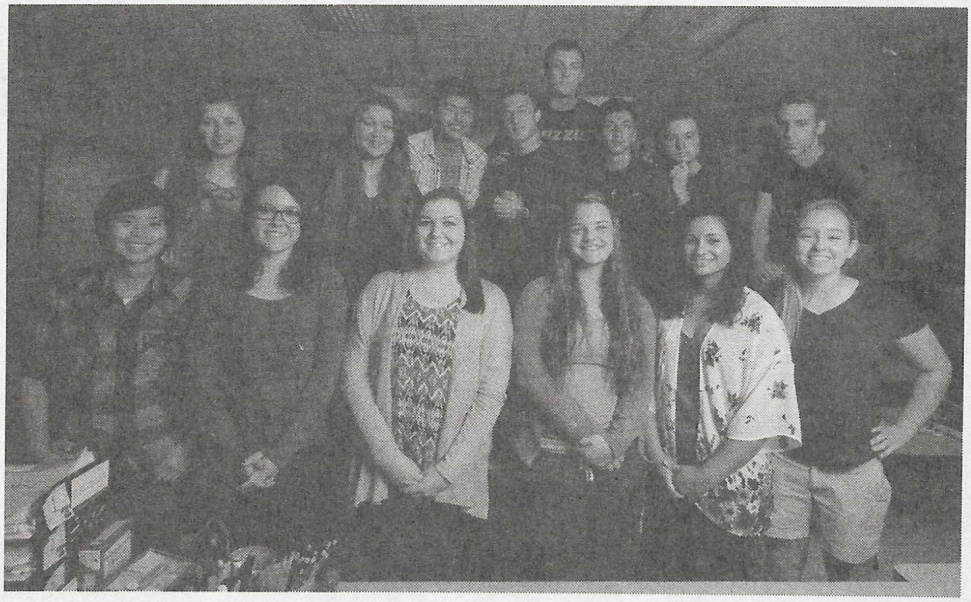

The ultimate goal of The Claw is reporting Sports, Culture, Life and Views stories to the students and faculty of Edwardsville High School. Journalism and Yearbook students collaborate to produce the stories and pictures; however, stories by students outside of these groups may submit work and be published, if the work is exceptional. The Claw is a student-run publication, and the opinions/ views featured in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of District 7 or any of the staff it employs.

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We are not required to give an explanation for rejected letters.

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New Club Helps Transition New Tigers

Juniors create program to help transfer students

Story by: Emily Ash, Co Editor-in-Chief

"TO NOT GET lost on the way to class. Straight A's. One friend." These were a few of the items my 15-year-old self scribbled into a notebook the night before my first day at EHS. Edwardsville had been "home" for less than a week.

My bedframe and mattress leaned up against a wall, unassembled and boxed up. I laid on an inflatable mattress, listing hopes for a new life at EHS, as if to write down my goals was to conjure up the sweet serendipity that always manages to catch up to the "New Kid" in Hollywood movies. When I was the new kid here, I didn't think good grades, new friends, and a somewhat-solid grip on my new environment was too much to ask for.

Neither did junior Nickie Cashdollar, a transfer student fresh from Dubuque, Iowa, a suburban town not unlike Edwardsville. "I owe the choice to attend EHS to Dr. Cramsey. He gave my family a tour of the school and made us all feel extremely welcome," Cashdollar said. "Dr. Cramsey asked what clubs my sister and I liked and then introduced us to people already at EHS involved in the things we wanted to do."

Only having lived in Edwardsville six short months, Cashdollar has blossomed into a fixture in the EHS student body. Belonging to multiple organizations (Drama Club, Student Council and Interact, to name a few), she says maintaining high involvement at school has helped her to adjust to the idea of Edwardsville being her home, even when her fate at EHS was not yet clear.

"In the movies when you see the girl sitting inthe bathroom to eat lunch. That's what I wanted to do for the first few weeks here. That's a feeling no one should ever have especially if moving is not your decision. At the very least a new students needs to have a place to sit at lunch," Cashdollar said. "It has taken a lot of work and sacrifice, but I would say I feel like a confident and influential student at EHS and that's all I wanted when I came here.... to be able to have my voice heard and that voice representing the student body."

"In the movies when you see the girl sitting in the bathroom to eat lunch. That's what I wanted to do for the first few weeks here."

Before starting at EHS, I too had some roughly-constructed hypothesis about this school and its students. The Metro-East can be a mysterious place, especially to transfers like myself, a former Chicagoan who honest-to-goodness imagined anything south of Springfield to be a cornfield-covered conundrum.

As a transfer, I had a lot of questions, with nobody to turn to for answers. "What do they do down there in Southern Illinois?" I would wonder. "Are my classmates all going to be farmers? Why is everyone here so obsessed with Nelly? How am I ever going to make this place work?"

For her next endeavor at EHS, Cashdollar is partnering with fellow junior Henry Lu to answer these hard-hitting questions. The two are forming a service club dedicated to serving students in positions similar to Cashdollar's (and mine).

The New Student Ambassadors will be an active club in fall 2015, matching up current students with transfers based on shared qualities and interests.

"I chose Henry to help because he is extremely social and was very welcoming to me when I came here, so I knew he was a hard worker and would help NSA to become a helpful club," Cashdollar said.

"I am a very social person and I introduced myself to people but not any people want to do that so I thought a little push from a group of people that want to welcome them into the school would help the new student a lot. I couldn't have done it without all the help."

Students Earn Silver Medallion Awards

EHS seniors earn area's top academic honor

Story By: Devin Kane, Life Editor

THE SILVER MEDALLION is one of the top academic honors graduating seniors from 21 southern Illinois schools can receive. An elite group made up of the top 8 percent of the senior class from each school will be acknowledged at what is considered the "river bend region's premier academic awards ceremony."

On April 16 the Silver Medallion Academic Excellence Award banquet will be held for the 27th consecutive year. This year sponsors of the banquet include The Alton Telegraph, Lewis and Clark Community College, Phillips 66, Olin Corp., Global Brass and Copper Inc. and First Mid America Credit Union.

Since 1988 the silver medallion has been "honoring graduating seniors who have attained the highest standing in their classes as a means of encouraging all students to strive to high academic achievement and excellence through scholarship."

Forty-seven seniors from EHS will receive this prestigious award based on their academic achievements over their high school career.

Recipients include Emily Albertina, Justin Allaria, Emily Ash, Suleman Bazai, John Bentley, John Brandenburg, Caleb Brandmeyer, Celeste Bremley, Claire Chandler, Kathryn Diekemper, Elizabeth Eastman, Michael Ezell, Madalyn Farrar, Eleanor Green, Jack Grieve, Samuel Griffin, Brydon Groves-Scott, Elise Holbert, Dana Kelsey, Catherine Kerber, Michaela Kulasekara, Rebecca Laurent, Jack Lever, Isabella Lilley, Kallen Loveless, Brooke Lunn, Elizabeth Lynn, Dan Marinko, Natasha Meinzen, Zachary Morrisey, Madison Parrett, Cassie Patrick, Eliza Pauk, Teagan Potter, Marguerite Puchner-Hardman, Amelia Pytlinski, Erik Saathoff, Wes Schoenthal, Sarah Scoggin, Ryan Serfas, Faith Tan, Taylor Tarter, Brandon Valley, Brian Veitch, Mara Walters, Lindsey Wolfford and Kathryn Zelechowski.

"It means a lot to me (to receive the award) because it shows that the hours of homework and studying I have done throughout high school has really paid off and I get to be recognized for it," Loveless said.

Students who earned the silver medallion have had to maintain a difficult course load and even higher grades to earn their ranking in the highly competitive top 8 percent.

"As you get closer and closer to the top, it becomes more and more competitive, so every hundredth of a percentage counts," Lilley said.

"A lot of us are honors students who have had numerous classes together," Tarter said. "It is a healthy competition, you want to do well but you also want your friends to suceed. I think that working together helps all of us but i'm not going to lie and say I don't enjoy getting a better score than my friends from time to time."

> **"What drives me is that I love succeeding and seeing my hard work pay off. Also, I'm competitive and I always want to do my best."**

To achieve such a level of academic success takes hours of studying and doing homework each night as well as a drive to achieve such success.

"I spend 2-4 hours a night doing homework or studying," Loveless said. "What drives me is that I love succeeding and seeing my hard work pay off. Also, I'm competitive and I always want to do my best."

In addition to the Silver Medallion award, students who rank in the top 8 percent of the graduating class and are also a varsity athlete are eligible for the Scholastic Athlete of the Year award.

"Balancing athletics and academics takes time management and being able to prioritize, which is really difficult in high school when you are taking honors and AP classes especially if you want to keep up your grades," Loveless said. "It means a lot to me to be able to succeed in balancing both because it is something I work very hard to do.

"It can be very difficult, but I also really enjoy the feeling of doing well both athletically and academically," Groves-Scott said. "It's often difficult to keep up with both of these very important parts of my life. I have to work very hard to manage my time wisely. This often leads to me having to skip some of the fun things I would rather do in the evenings or over the weekends in order to do homework or get a run in."

Since freshman year and before these students have recognized the importance of achieving good grades.

"I have been a motivated student from a young age," Tarter said. "I always wanted good grades but I knew my high school academic reputation would matter more than any other grades before. I guess I really started pushing freshman year and I have continued to challenge myself while working towards good grades."

Beyond the awards and academic reputation the grades these students earned in high school will help them when it comes to college as well.

"I had an understanding that getting good grades and working hard was important for a long time," Groves-Scott said. "When I was younger my parents and teachers often talked about scholarships and I realized that if I worked hard I could help pay for my college. Also I felt like it was a waste of time to mot try my best at school."

Behind each recipient is a motivation to earn such high academic marks. For these high achieving students, their drive for excellence accompanied them as they stepped into EHS and will not leave when they walk out.

"My freshmen and sophomore years the motivation was primarily driven by the grades," Lilley said. "Recently, I kind of grasped that this work is a necessary prerequisite to cause any type of change in the world. So I push myself to seek past the instruction and to apply more work than what is necessary for the A. By growing academically, my hope is to gain the tools necessary to go and make a change. I still care about the grade, but I'm not as worried about being the top performer. I think there's a much deeper satisfaction in education when you strive for a cause much greater than your personal reward."

Young Tigers Have Earned Their Stripes

Girls Basketball squad has exceeded expectations

Photo By Devin K

Story by: Zain Pyarali, Sports Editor & Bailey Zimmer, Staff Writer

"We are very inexperienced and very young," Those were the words that head coach Lori Blade said in the preseason about her Lady Tiger Basketball team. Fast forward three months and those same Tigers finished the regular season undefeated, made an elite eight run in the state tournament, were ranked no. 2 in the USA Today Illinois State High School rankings and no. 27 in the nation.

The young Tigers were anchored by star 6-foot-true freshman Rachel Pranger this year, who averaged 15 points per game down low and the sharp shooting sophomore Makenzie Silvey, who averaged a cool 14.3 points per game while stroking a crisp 40 percent from beyond the arc.

But stats aren't the numbers that the Tigers are concerned about; it's about winning each and every night and doing it for their teammates. "They are a very good group of kids that appreciate each other and what they bring to the game. I think that's important for team chemistry," Blade said. "I don't think any of them have a concern with personal stats, it's all about what the team needs."

Along with Pranger and Silvey, senior Amayha Dycus, junior Aaliyah Box and sophomore Criste'on Waters round out the starting five for the Tigers with freshman Kate Martin earning big minutes off the bench. This young starting lineup took over for a group of five seniors from a year ago who went on to the Elite Eight last season and finished with a 28-2 record.

"We came off the bench behind five seniors last year, but that helped us gain experience to be ready for this year," Silvey said.
Edwardsville showed no mercy on their opponents this season by outscoring them by nearly 28 points per game.

"We are hungry and we want to prove everyone wrong this season," Box said.

Dycus, who transferred from Hawaii, was solid at the point guard position all season for the Tigers. She just averaged 5.5 points per game, but the entire offense runs through her.

"We've had different kids step up at different times this season," Blade said. "Probably one of the biggest impacts has been Amayah Dycus' presence to solidify the point position."

The Tigers were dominant in postseason play in the early rounds. Breezing through the regional, Edwardsville defeated Granite City 57-10 i semi-finals and then took down Pekin 69-4 the title game.

"The underclassmen have done a great job. Waters and Silvey were the ones with the n experience coming into the season but the done a great job. Box has done a great job, our best defender, and she has done a great job on the opponents' best scorer," Blade s "What Rachel (Pranger) and Kate (Martin) to do what they've produced for us has be really important. That goes to having othe and putting them in positions to make th comfortable to do the job they are capable doing."

In the sectional semi-finals, Edwardsville t on fellow conference foe Belleville West wl resulted in a 48-41 victory for the Tigers. D 11 points early in the sectional champions to Rock Island, Edwardsville stayed calm a grinded out a 53-51 victory to advance to t super-sectional.

"We've kind of waited for someone to put check. Some teams have," Blade said. "Th had us down and we've had three overtim this season that you wouldn't expect the

young kids to respond as well as they did in those situation because there were good crowds and it was on the road and then the St. Joe game at home, but they've executed very well and have been put in the positions that they needed to in certain circumstances."

The Tigers finally had someone put them in check in the Class 4A Super-Sectional game against Benet Academy. Edwardsville was down 16 points to Benet at the end of the first quarter but came back to cut the Red Wing lead by one in the third quarter, until ultimately falling short to the private school from Lisle, Ill. 61-50.

Blade was very proud of her girls for fighting back and making a game out of what had seemed to be a lost cause with the season on the line.

"You can do that against average teams, but to do that against one of the best teams in the state says a lot about our heart and our character to not just give in," Blade said.

"When you graduate all five starters it is considered to be a rebuilding team but it doesn't mean that we don't have kids that have been role players in the past year or two that are ready to step in for their opportunity. That's kind of what we pride ourselves on being a program, not just a team who is successful for that one year."

> "Last year we came up short, so we're looking forward to getting back at it this year."

For a team who was supposed to be, "rebuilding" this year, the Tigers played well beyond their years this season and there is no doubt that they will be back next season with a chip on their shoulder.

"I'm excited to work with these kids again in the future," Blade said. "Hopefully they all stick with it and hopefully they commit to the summer and get better but to just assume that we're going to be good again, I don't think you can do that. It just made the target bigger for us if it can be but the kids have to look at it as a challenge."

Senior point guard Amayha Dycus dribbles the ball up court against Teutopolis in the Edwardsville Holiday Hoops Tournament.

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Birds Get Positioned for Return to Playoffs

Cardinals transition to 2015 season with optimism

Story by: Bailey Zimmer, Staff Writer

FOLLOWING A FULL YEAR of many emotions for the 2014 Cardinals, the ball club looks to return to their familiar position: the playoffs

If losing in the National League Championship Series (NLCS) to the San Francisco Giants was bad enough, the Cardinals lost their right fielder, Oscar Taveras, in a car accident in his home country of the Dominican Republic one week after ending their season.

The Cardinals will be playing with a chip on their shoulder this season as a result of a tough offseason. The team will wear an "18" on the sleeve of their uniforms to remember the late right fielder Taveras.

After Taveras' death, the Cardinals were not only in mourning the loss of teammate, but they were without their elite right fielder.

The Redbirds made a big move and traded for right fielder Jason Heyward of the Atlanta Braves.

"I'm excited to be a part of such a storied franchise in St. Louis," Heyward told Channel 5 KSDK.

This is a big year for Heyward for a couple of reasons. Although he is a solid starting outfielder with good speed and a powerful bat, he hasn't performed to the hype that surrounded him when he was called up from the minors. This is a contract year for Heyward, which will add more pressure to the young career of the "J-Hey Kid." His contract expires at the end of the 2015 season, and with a solid season, Heyward could be rewarded with a long term contract. Heyward needs to a big factor in the Cardinals lineup in 2015 to enhance his value in the Majors.

The Cardinals' captain, Yadier Molina will return in 2015 hoping to compete without injury. Molina arrived at spring training 20 pounds lighter than last fall. His motivation to lose weight was to prove that he is over his oblique injury and he's determined to keep his body in the best shape of his career, to lower the risk of injury.

"I think historically, Yadi (Molina) has come into camp in leaner shape if you will," General Manager John Mozeliak told KSDK Channel 5. "This off-season he looked like he hit it really hard. I think he's looking at sort of longevity of career and how to help manage that. If he feels like losing some weight benefits him for that, I think it's great."

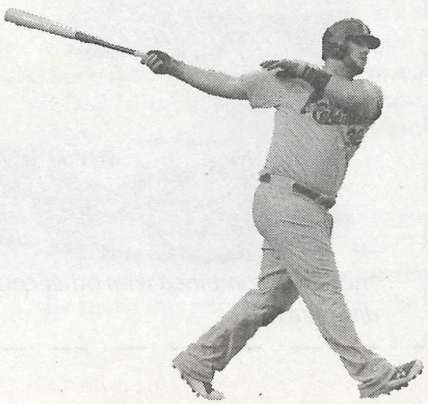
First basemen Matt Adams showed some consistency last year by hitting .288 with 15 homeruns. The big man will bat fourth in 2015 and needs to drive in more runs than he has in previous years.

Returning to the infield to join Adams is second basemen Kolten Wong, shortstop Jhonny Peralta and All-Star third basemen, Matt Carpenter.

In the outfield, the Birds will return the powerful bat of Matt Holliday, the speedy, high average hitting Jon Jay and Heyward.

The Cardinals' strong pitching staff is also something to be optimistic about. Michael Wacha, who was injured most of the year, will return to the rotation healthy as ever. He will join the proven veteran Adam Wainwright, Carlos Martinez, John Lackey and Lance Lynn. To close games, *hold breath* Trevor Rosenthal will return his near heart attacks to fans to finish games for the Cardinals.

With everything that has happened to the Cards, this team will be determined to get back to the World Series in 2015. The way their roster looks, the talent they have and the support they have in St. Louis, look for the Redbirds to be highly competitive this year.



Left to right: Matt Carpenter watches the ball land in the outfield. Adam Wainwright throws a pitch. Matt Adams finishes a home-run swing.

All photo courtesy of AP Images

Q&A With the Deadliest Duo in the League

Terrific Tyler Tandem Takes Tigers to Title

Story by: Eden Coppersmith, Staff Writer

THE DUO OF junior Tyler Hinterser and sophomore Tyler Schaeffer played a key roll in leading the Tigers to a fourth straight MVCHA championship. Schaeffer broke the EHS record for most goals in a single season (conference play only) and junior Tyler Hinterser finished only two goals behind him.

Schaeffer had 48 goals in conference play and Hinterser tied the previous record, which was held by current head coach Jason Walker, with 46 goals, helping the EHS Hockey team win the MVCHA Championship and finished the season a perfect 22-0. This dangerous duo combined to have the most points (goals and assists) together in one single season in the entire conference.

EC: Did you expect to do this well after last season was over?

TH: Yes, I am confident in my abilities and work hard for my successes.

TS: I expected to do better (than last season) for sure, but not as good as I ended up doing this season.

EC: Who do you look up to on the ice?

TH & TS: We really look up to our captain Justin Warta while we are on and off the ice.

EC: What gets you prepared to play in big games?

TH: Definitely my motivation to be the biggest and best player on the ice.

TS: Before every game I eat a 12 inch Subway sandwich.

EC: During the playoffs you scored almost half the goals each game, how does that feel?

TH: I am not going to lie, it feels good to score but it feels even better to take the win from our rivals.

TS: Every shift I was just trying to do my part and that consisted of scoring sometimes.

EC: How does it feel to have been a part of the four-peat?

TH: Great, because I know I contributed in a lot of the wins, which felt absolutely amazing.

TS: Inspiring because I am apart of continuing the tradition of excellence.

EC: What caused such a dramatic change between this year and last year that made you nearly unstoppable?

TH: I think it was definitely the hard work that I put in during my off-season.

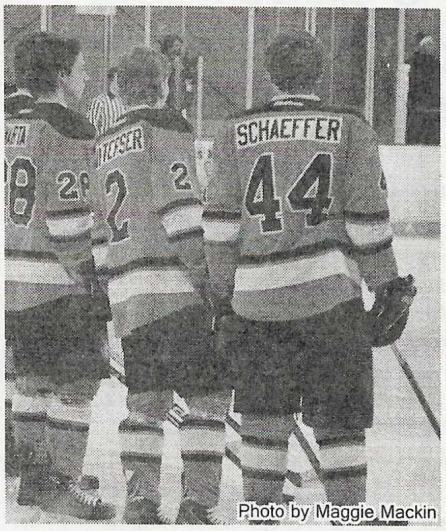
TS: I worked on my shot a lot over the summer and it boosted my confidence and I realized I could score.

EC: How did it feel to win Athlete of the Week?

TH: It felt good to be recognized for being successful on the ice and helping my team become successful in the process.

TS: It was a great honor, especially at such a young age.

Schaeffer stops on a dime and looks up the ice in a game vs O'Fallon.

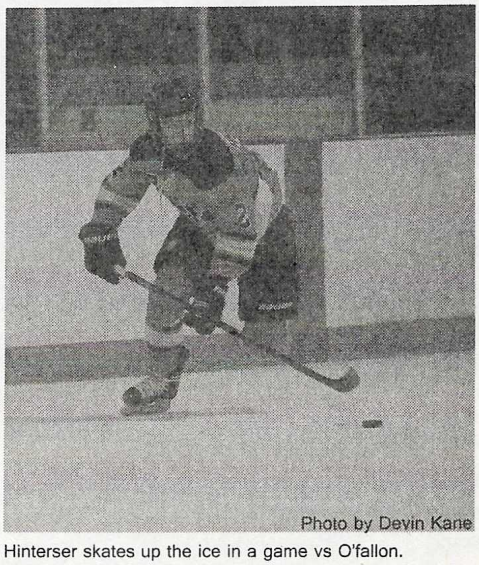


Schaeffer and Hinterser line up on the ice during the National Anthem before a game against Triad.

EC: What makes you two such a dangerous duo on the ice?

TH: We have great chemistry at finding each other around the ice and we can both put the puck in the net.

TS: We both have an act for the net and I always know where he is and he knows where I am, so we find a way to win games.



Hinterser skates up the ice in a game vs O'fallon.

Sophomore Slips into Sparkly Slippers

Foster plays Cinderella in the Spring show

Story by: Devin Kane, Life Editor

photo by Devin Kane

A ROLE THAT typcially might be filled by the shoes of an upperclassman is being filled by those of a young sophomore who knows no limits, only perfection.

Competition was tough for the role of Cinderella in the EHS Drama Club's performance of "Cinderella," but come opening night sophomore Maddy Foster will be wearing the glass slippers when the curtains open.

"I was happily surprised...I feel so privileged to have this opportunity as an underclassman," Foster said. "I would have been happy in any role but it was very much a dream come true to get the part of Cinderella."

"Maddy just seemed like the right pick to us and we are not disappointed," Drama Club director Mrs. Motley said.

Blond hair, fair skin. Foster fits the mold of Cinderella perfectly. Her drive for perfection sets her apart from many her age.

"Honestly, I don't even realize she's younger. She is so supportive and compassionate. She always gives her 100 percent and she is an incredible actress, singer and dancer to be working with," said Ryan Serfas, who plays Prince Charming.

Seen as both a "blessing and a curse," Foster has a drive to push herself beyond limits.

"It's good because I have the ability to push myself to be the best I can be, but the downside is that it can be hard to just let myself go and have fun and be happy with my end result," Foster said.

"She's doing a great job and working hard," Mrs. Motley said.

Though Foster mirrors the image of Cinderella, assuming the role presents a whole new challenge.

"I really work to develop a character backstory and work to get into my character's mentality. I do a lot of vocal and other backstage warm ups," Foster said.

Despite her age, Foster still has the same goal as all other lead actors who have taken the stage at EHS.

"I cannot wait until opening night and to see the faces of the kids who come to see the show," Foster said. "It's what I love to do."

No matter the role she is playing Foster is sure to work hard to perfect it.

"Maddy works her tail off. She is willing to work as long as it takes to get something right and yet she's still so fun to work with," Serfas said. "She has the perfect balance of hard work but keeping a fun light hearted attitude. She has such a great outlook. Anytime I'm having a bad day at drama, she always is uplifting and helps me out. Her work ethic is really really good and I admire it a lot. When she needs to have something memorized or learned it always is. She puts in the hard work and it shows."

The cast of Cinderella performs a scene during a rehearsal.

photo by Nina Weatherly

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Prom 2015

Birds of a Feather

Saturday, April 25 from 7-11 pm in the Collinsville Gateway Center. Doors open at 6. Dinner will be served at 7:15.

Only Juniors and Seniors may purchase tickets. Your student I.D. will be required when purchasing and the night of prom. Ticket sales begin April 6. Ticket prices start at $50 and can be purchased at lunch. After April 20 tickets are $60 each and must be purchased from Mrs. Knabe after school in A247. If you are buying a ticket for another EHS student, you must have their I.D. and your own when you purchase tickets.

Prom attendees must purchase tickets within the first two weeks of ticket sales to be able to reserve a table at prom. For those who do not reserve a table, seating is first-come, first-served.

All guest forms must be completed and signed by an administrator at the time of purchase. These forms may be found in the main office on the spinny thing and must be turned in at the time you purchase your tickets from Prom Committee.

Turn Back the Hip-Hop Clock

Passionate, Lyrical and Fly: Hip-Hop's Top 5 Albums

Story by: Peter Byers, Staff Writer

EVERYBODY KNOWS NAMES like Drake, J-Cole and Lil Wayne. Many people are blind to the old school hip-hop rap game that consisted of meaningful lyrics combined with a true story line. Modern day rap is about women, money and how many drugs one can consume in a night. Take a look at some instant classics: the top five hip hop albums ever.

1. Nas, "Illmatic"- Illmatic could have easily been called The Blueprint when it was released in 1994 which would've changed the name of Jay Z's iconic Blueprint albums. Nas used five of the best producers at the time in the game to lay out his groundbreaking lyrics and would create the new hip-hop LP template. He was heralded as the second coming of Rakim. It is simply the best ever.

2. Dr.Dre, "The Chronic"- The Chronic was released in 1992. It would sell over 7.6 million copies as of July 2014 according to Nielsen SoundScan, peaked at No. 3 on the Billboard 200 and spawned three top 40 singles on the Billboard Hot 100. It redefined the west coast rap game and made rap accessible to the radio.

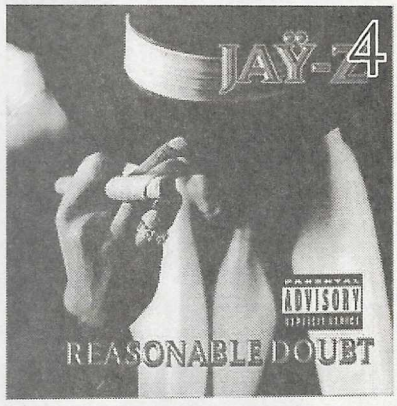
3. Notorious B.I.G., "Ready To Die"- Biggie mastered the game. His voice was so unique that all he had to do was enunciate an ad-lib like "Ugh" and you automatically knew it was him. The album reinvented the east coast rap game and solidified Biggie Smalls as a legend.

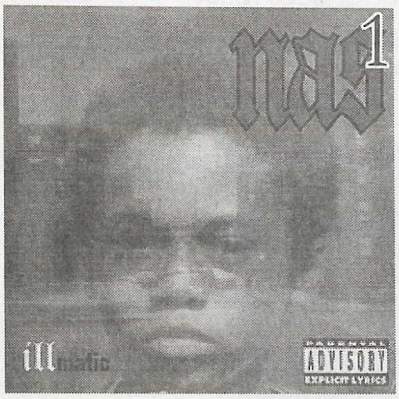
4. Jay-Z, "Reasonable Doubt"- Jay-Z grew at a rapid rate in the rap game. With his release of Reasonable Doubt in 1996 by Roc-A-Fella and Priority records, Jay-Z locked himself a spot in the record books. Reasonable Doubt has been certified platinum by the Recording Industry Association of America and, as of 2006, has sold 1.5 million copies in the United States.

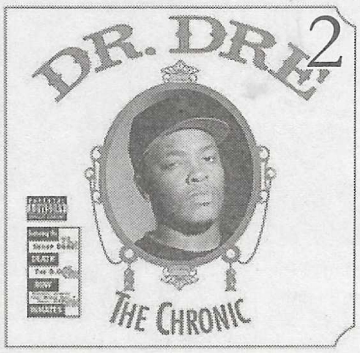
5. Wu-Tang, "36 Chambers" (Enter The Wu-Tang)- Wu-Tang dropped "36 Chambers" like a bad habit giving a rebirth to New York rap and paving the way for stars like Biggie, Jay-Z and Mobb Deep. The group's leader RZA, also known as Prince Rakeem, single handedly produced the album with its heavy beats and hardcore lyrics. Despite its underground sound, the album peaked at number 41 on the Billboard 200.

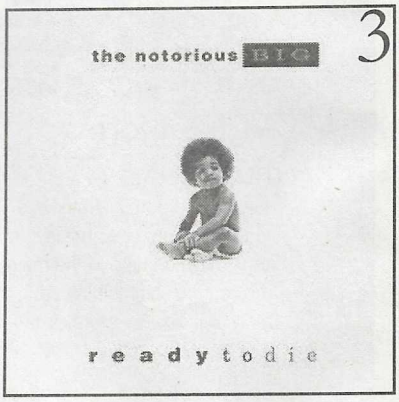
Without a doubt, old school hip-hop gets overlooked with today's antics of rappers in this era. These albums, along with many others, set the tone for rap for years to come. Listen to the message in the songs of each album and acquire some knowledge of what rap really is, not what it has become.

Honorable Mention: A Tribe Called Quest ("Midnight Marauders"), Tupac ("Me Against The World"), Public Enemy ("It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back").









'Dark Sky Paradise' Blesses Big Sean

Released album expresses rapper's new lifestyle

story by: Cristina Rivera-Bosques, Co Editor-in-chief

DETROIT-BASED RAPPER Big Sean depicted his new lavish lifestyle and deepest fears in his first successful studio album Dark Sky Paradise.

The lyricist, returning from a called-off engagement, excited fans with this $14 album packed with a dark theme and the reality of his "finally famous" life.

"Dark Sky (Skyscrapers)" begins Dark Sky Paradise with his thrilling ode to the skyscrapers that signify his official entrance into fame. Big Sean repeatedly raps, "Started from the basement made it to the skyscrapers," while explaining his rough "10-year overnight success."

Sean continues the album with track no. 2, "Blessings (feat. Drake)." The duo perfectly illustrates their gratitude about making it to the top. Drake continuously sings "I'm way up I feel blessed," in the hook–a phrase that every teen will be singing when the song airs on the radio.

Jhené Aiko adds further talent to Dark Sky Paradise in her and Sean's catchy song "I Know (feat. Jhené Aiko)." A deep bass accompanied by Sean's deep voice and Jhené's sweet melody creates an eerie mood for the hit. The two collaborate perfectly.

Released in Sean's EP, "I Don't Mess With You (feat. E-40) comes in at no. 4. A popular hit among listeners, critics think Sean is rapping about his ex-fiancée Naya Rivera.

No. 5,"Play No Games (feat. Chris Brown)," is a light-hearted rap about winning over a girl. The song opens with a sample from 1980's band Guy's "Piece of My Love," and continues with Sean's upbeat rhymes about his love's possibilities.

Sean showcases his own style without the help of other artists in his three-minute song"Paradise (Extended)."

But the most anticipated song is still "Research (feat. Ariana Grande)," a collaboration between Sean and his new love interest. A satirical song about couples who research each other, the fun song is exactly what we expected from the two–a fun beat and truthful lyrics.

Twenty-one time Grammy award-winner and mentor Kanye West appears twice on the album.

Recording artist Travi$ Scott produced "All Your Fault (feat. Kanye West)" (no. 3), one of the best songs on the album. Kanye introduces a fascinating hook singing the words "lit for your love."

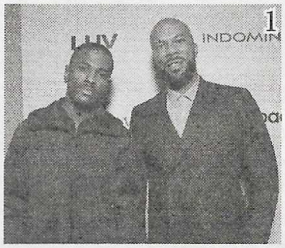
Soft piano keys open for the sentinmental song "Once Man Can Change the World (feat. Kanye West & John Legend). John Legend beautifully uses his pianist skills and voice to add a touch of sweetness to the song about making it on your own and loving oneself.

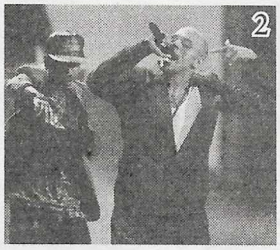
"Platinum and Wood" ends the album with a reflection on Sean's inner-city childhood when he spent gas money "on everything except gas." An oscillation from a fast to slow beat enhances the mellow song, which ends with a recording of his dad saying, "Sean it's good to be home isn't it?"

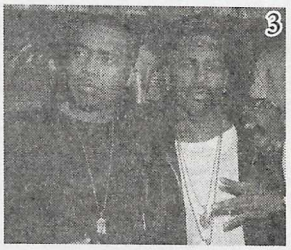
Sean ensured his first time on Billboard 200 chart with Dark Sky Paradise. During the first week alone, the rapper sold 139,000 copies, 54, 434 more copies than Finally Famous sold in its first week.

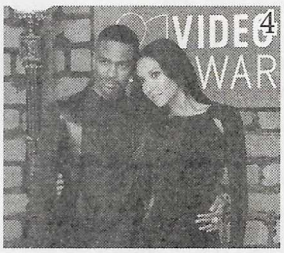
Noteably better than any other work Sean has created, Dark Sky Paradise has a safe bet for a 2015 Grammy for Best Rap Album. Exceeding expectations is no secret to Sean.

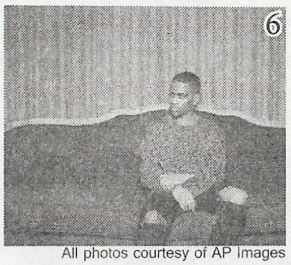
Throughout the Years











All photos courtesy of AP Images

1. Common and Big Sean attend the "Luv" premiere in L.A. in West Hollywood in July of 2010.

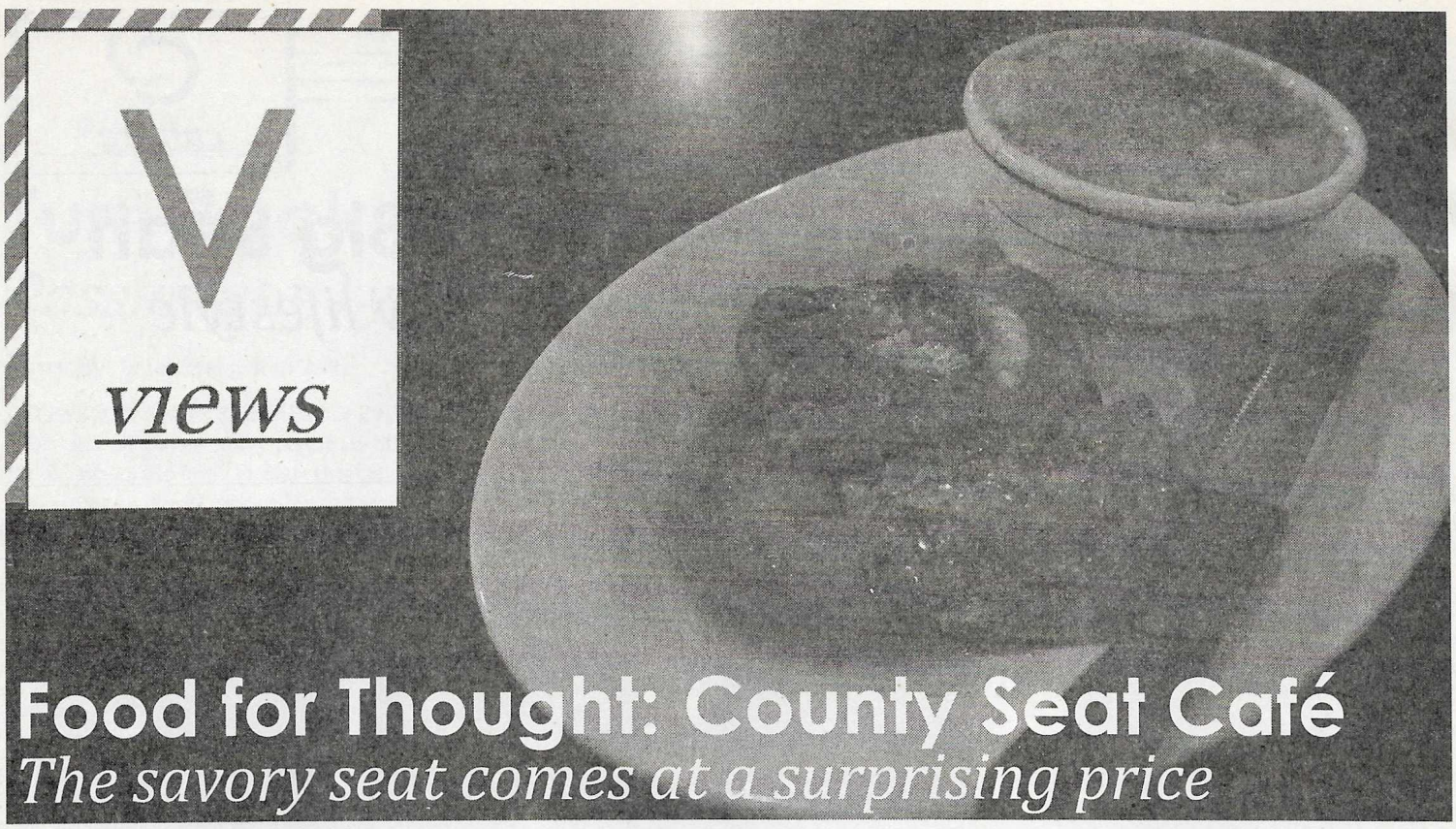
2. Big Sean performs with artist Chris Brown at the 2011 BET Awards in Los Angeles.

3. Rappers Nas and Big Sean enjoy celebrating Jimmie Maggette's birthday the summer of 2012.

4. Naya Rivera and Big Sean flaunt their then-relationship at the 2013 MTV MVA's.

5. KIIS FM invites Big Sean to perform at the Wango Tango in Carson, Calif. in May of 2014.

6. Big Sean poses at the Redbury Hotel in L.A. to promote his 2015 album, Dark Sky Paradise.



Food for Thought: County Seat Café

The savory seat comes at a surprising price

Story and photos by: Sam Jueckstock, Views Editor

UNDER THE ORGANIC yellow lighting, I received my meal. The heavy porcelain plate made a satisfying thud upon being placed on the table. The pearl white color of the platter provided nice contrast against my juicy, mouth-watering steak, which was adorned with lettuce and two tomatoes.

The two-year-old County Seat Café proved to be an amazing deal. The food is original, quality, homemade cooking. As I walked into the tiny café for the first time, I already felt a sense of belonging. The café looked like it was sucked right out of the TV and taken from a classic Hallmark movie. Booth seats encircled quaint tables in the center of the café. It was Sunday night, and a few elderly patrons sat at the round tables.

Choosing one of the booth seats, I scooted in and ordered a Mellow Yellow. My waitress disappeared as I opened up the tri-fold dinner menu, which was simple and reader friendly. After mulling over my options, I just couldn't decide. Should I choose a burger, which is something I can never finish off at sit-down dining? Should I order the Sunday special fried chicken platter? By now, my waitress had arrived and I still hadn't made up my mind. My eyes scanned the menu and landed on the most amazing food of all—steak.

"I'd like the sirloin steak, medium rare, with a Caesar salad and baked mac 'n cheese, please," I confidently told the waitress.

Caesar salad came first, and was one of the dishes that most impressed me. A petite white bowl that I could fit in the palm of my hand contained the perfect amount of Romaine lettuce, matchstick carrots, shredded cabbage, and one enormous "crouton" the size of a playing card. The salad automatically came with my choice of dressing served on the side. Because of its manageable size, the dish was an ideal appetizer—and the first salad I'd ever completely finished at a restaurant.

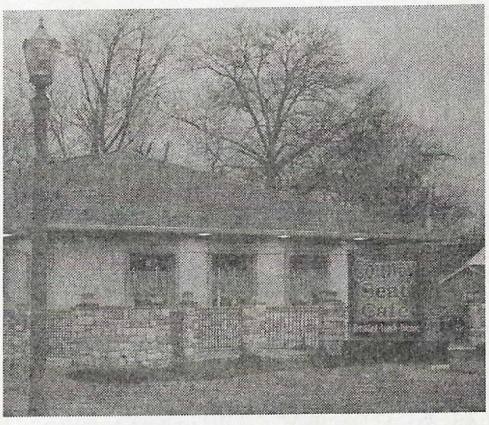
The café looked like it was sucked right out of the TV and taken from a classic Hallmark movie.

Ten minutes later, my steak arrived, prepared to perfection. I sliced into the perfectly pink-centered cut of meat. Although its fresh and robust flavor was carved out by the razor sharp steak knife that had been provided to me, it could've just as easily been cut open with a dull butter knife. The intense flavor and juices melted the tender meat in my mouth, reminding me of all the steaks I'd had in the past that were the equivalent of shoe leather. This steak, however, was one that only comes once in a blue moon.

I had begun with 12 ounces of meaty goodness, but a forkful still remained. The last bite enticed me as if this were my last meal on death row, urging me to finish. I was full. I took the piece in my mouth, and upon swallowing, I knew I couldn't continue.

My waitress stopped by and proactively offered me a to-go container for the mac 'n cheese, to which I obliged. Not only was the food impressive, but the service as well.

County Seat's sustenance and service came at a fantastic price. For about $15, I was well taken care of. As I walked out, I noticed more outdoor seating that I hadn't before. I look forward to taking advantage of the outdoor seating and cuisine during the coming summer months.



Wake Up a New You Next Quarter

How to get ready for school without caffeine...

Story by: Caitlin Rutz, Culture Editor

SO WAKING UP ten minutes before your bus comes with a cup of coffee in hand just isn't working for you? Here are a few tips on how to be more awake and ready for your day without the help of the caffeine many of us are addicted to.

1. Have a carb-free breakfast

If you have a breakfast with too many carbs, you'll end up crashing in just a few hours. Try eating eggs, vegetables or fruit. Apples and bananas are the top two fruits while spinach and sweet potatos are great vegetables for energy. Maybe make yourself a fruit salad with a handful of berrys, some cut up apples and bananas and spinach.

The posibilities are endless.

Photo Courtesy of AP Images

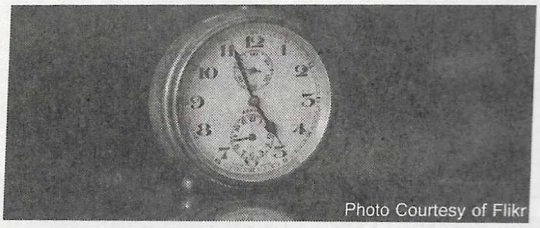


Photo Courtesy of Flikr

2. Wake up at the same time

If you are constantly waking up at varying times your body clock will be thrown off and have no set schedule to run off of. Your bus comes at 6:10 and you want to have a shower and get ready with time to spare? Try to wake up as close to five as possible and continue to wake up at that time. You'd be surprised what a set sleep schedule can do for you.

3. Don't jump to your feet

You're not supposed to force yourself awake in a harsh way by jumping to your feet. If you need time to wake up, set your alarm and sit up for a while before getting up and getting ready. This one helps me. I usually sit up in bed for five to 10 minutes before getting ready so I can wake myself up in an easy way.

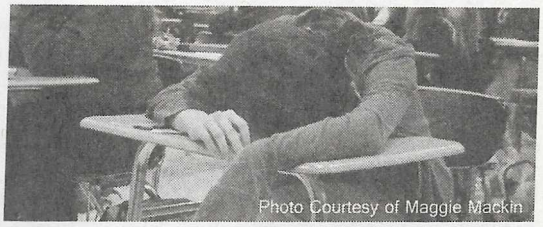


Photo Courtesy of Maggie Mackin

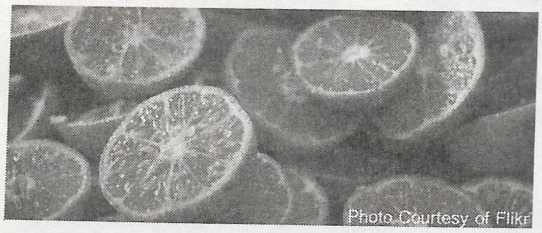


Photo Courtesy of Flikr

4. Drink some freshly squeezed juice

Remember that extra time I mentioned in number 2? This is where it would come in handy. If you have some oranges around the house, cut them up and squeeze yourself some real orange juice. Not only will freshly squeezed juice have more of a kick, but it will also help you wake up. The live enzymes will help for sure.

5. Stimulate your brain

Listen, I know that this doesn't sound the most appealing. We're high school students who get to school by 7:20 in the morning and we aren't happy about it. You should make the most of it. Sit down for a carb-free breakfast, bunker down and play Sudoku or write in a journal. You can draw and color too if that's your cup of tea. Just try to get your brain working a little more than usual.

Photo Courtesy of Maggie Mackin

Just a few extra steps a day, and yes, a few extra minutes can result in you being more alert than usual. Try it out, it won't work for everyone, but it might just work for you. Staying modivated and alert during these last few months of this year will benefit you in the long run. Let's make it the best spring ever!

J2 Bros' Guide to Finding a Prom Date

We break down the steps to snagging a perfect date

Story by: J2 Bros Editorial Board

IT'S THAT TIME again: the time of the year that brings forth havoc and nervousness all for one night under the lights with your friends. It is, perhaps, the most anticipated night of the year for high school girls: ah yes, prom.

Prom represents something new for the juniors and the last hoorah for the seniors. If you make it in even younger, you might be a last-minute decision or wonderfully beautiful. No matter what the age, we can all agree that prom night brings with it loads of excitement. It's the only time when we can dress up with much class and elegance, yet still pull off dance moves more provocative than an R. Kelly music video.

For us guys, the only hard thing about it is just getting a girl to say yes. Though she might not like surprises, every girl enjoys being shown off. As long as you've got the latter part covered, you should be in the clear for a "yes." Stand up on the lunch table and ask her in front of everyone.

A courageous act such as that should result in many positives coming your way. Just make sure you ask a nice, funny girl. Stay away from gossipers, or you might as well just stay home and watch "Keeping Up with the Kardashians." If you aren't sure whom to ask, nothing beats going with a close friend. But be prepared to get shut down if you try to sneak in a kiss. Just because you're her prom date, doesn't mean you're out of the friend zone.

Getting ready is the next step. We guys have it pretty easy. I can't imagine what kind of routine ladies go through prepping for prom. Just try to look your best. But stay away from the all-white tuxedos, unless you want the next full-time job guarding the gates of heaven. Maybe upgrade from Axe body spray to some Polo cologne.

And go easy on the stuff too; you're a man, not an Abercrombie and Fitch store. But all you really have to worry about is complimenting your date. A girl's preparation for prom is not only expensive, but time-consuming as well. Acknowledge the fact that she spent hours in the hair salon and looked at countless dresses until she found the perfect one.

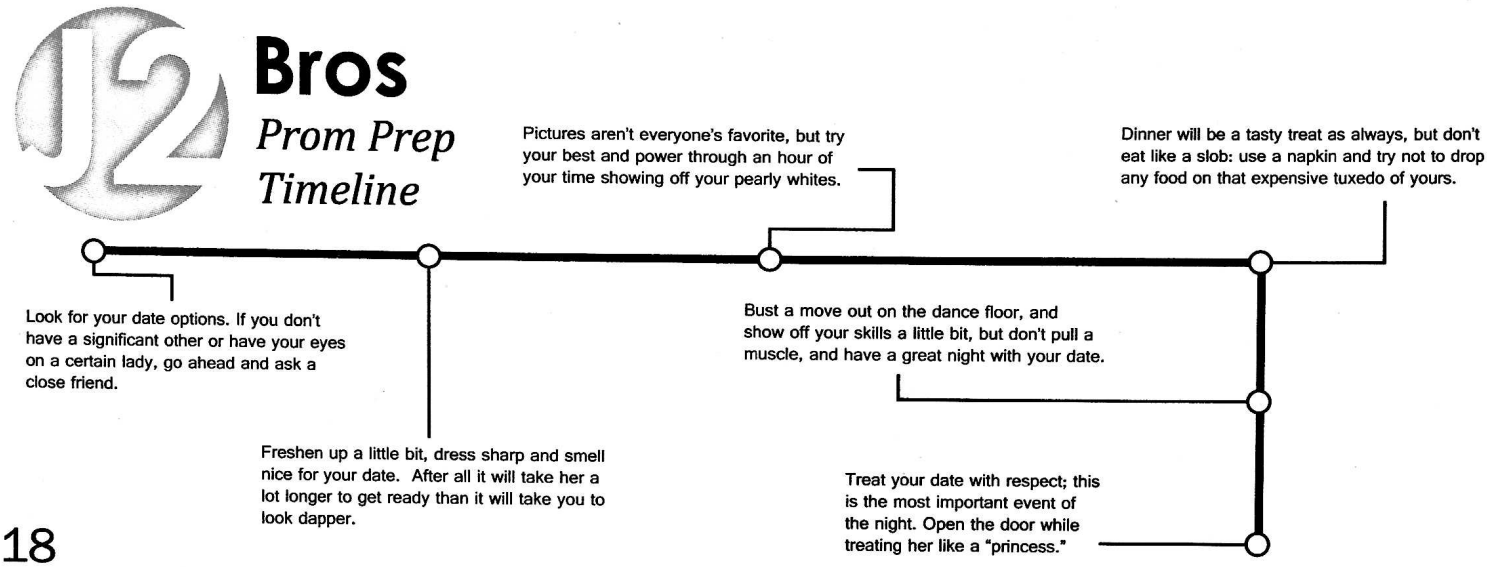
After the lengthy process of taking pictures with everyone, it's time to finally go to the dance. Make sure you chose a table with people you know because prom is all about being with your friends. If you got stuck with some randoms, hopefully you're a friendly guy, or that'll be more awkward than a dinner with super-creepy Rob Lowe. The food's good too, so remember those table manners your mother taught you.

"Make it a memorable night. You only have a short time left being young, so be sure to make every moment count. You can be stupid, just don't be too stupid."

Once the tunes start pouring out of the speakers, it's time to grab your girl and hit the dance floor. Let's just hope that "No Type" by the Rae Sremmurd comes on. You want to be out there for as long as your legs can take it.

If you leave sweating, you had a good time. Just try to act like you're in any "Step Up" movie and you'll be fine. If you break out the coffee grinder, I will stand up and applaud you. Do something you will remember for a while because that's the whole reason you're there in the first place.

Make it a memorable night. You only have a short time left being young, so be sure to make every moment count. You can be stupid, just don't be too stupid. You've read our advice since first quarter, and if you've followed it accordingly, you should have won many hearts over by now. Prom night is your night, so be yourself, but don't forget the J2 Bros' suggestions. The keys to success are in the palm of your hand; now all you have to do is open the door. Have a fun time, but most importantly, be safe through the night.

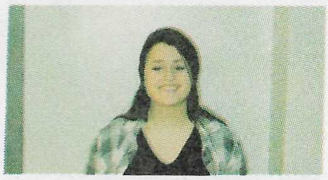

J2 Bros
Prom Prep Timeline
Look for your date options. If you don't have a significant other or have your eyes on a certain lady, go ahead and ask a close friend.
Freshen up a little bit, dress sharp and smell nice for your date. After all it will take her a lot longer to get ready than it will take you to look dapper.
Pictures aren't everyone's favorite, but try your best and power through an hour of your time showing off your pearly whites.
Bust a move out on the dance floor, and show off your skills a little bit, but don't pull a muscle, and have a great night with your date.
Dinner will be a tasty treat as always, but don't eat like a slob: use a napkin and try not to drop any food on that expensive tuxedo of yours.
Treat your date with respect; this is the most important event of the night. Open the door while treating her like a "princess."

What are you looking forward to at Prom?

"Being with my friends."
Hannah Lawrence, senior

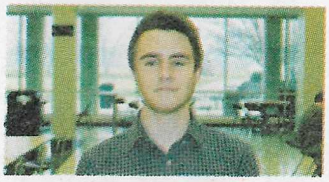
"Getting the flow ready."
Brady Griffin, senior

"Getting all dressed up."
Jordyn Failoni, senior



"I'm excited to help out Mrs. Knabe."
Jeff Gall, teacher

"The photobooth and the new food!"
Sairee Knabe, teacher



"The dance and having fun at the after-party."
Alex Mosella, senior

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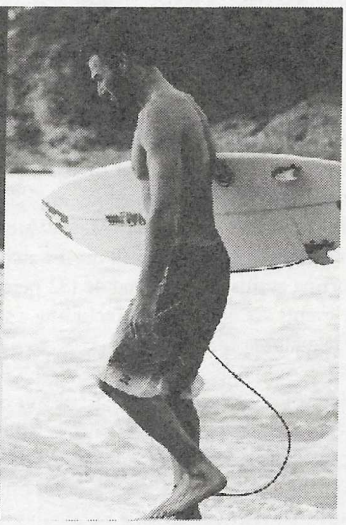

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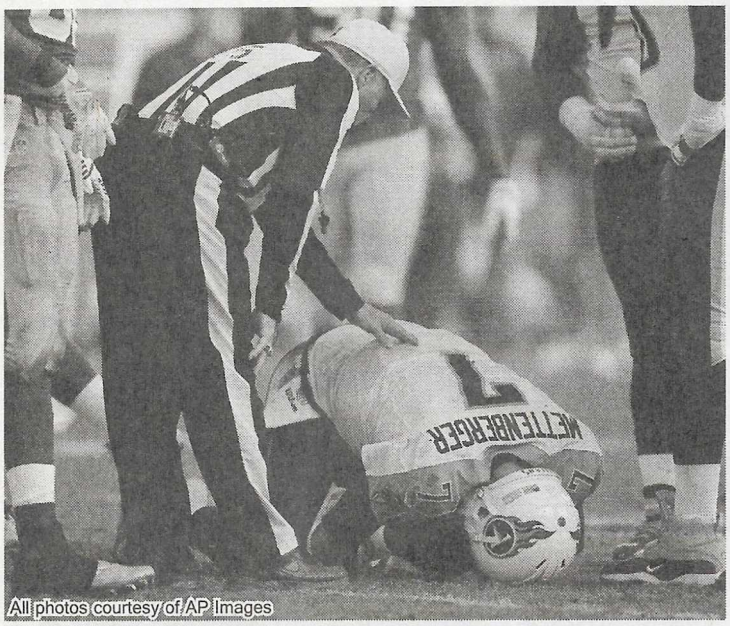
NFL Days Might Be Coming to a Close

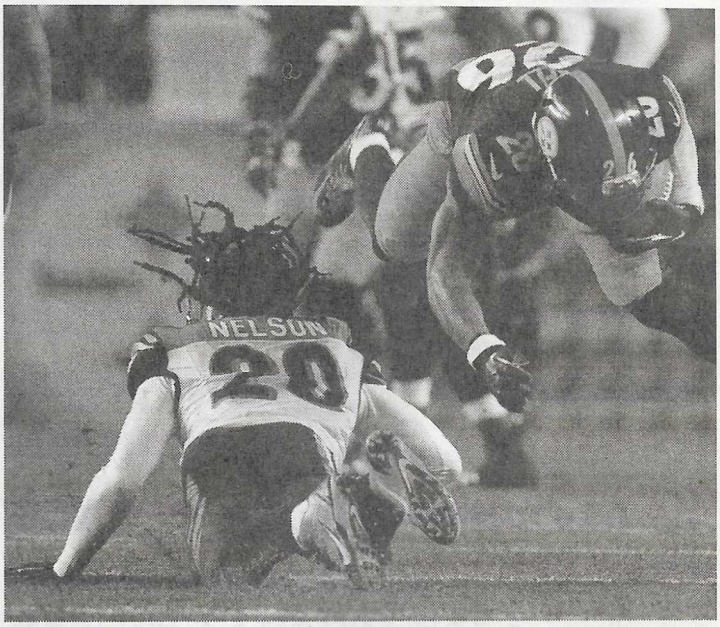
Danger of injuries causes NFL future to look dim...

Story by: Peter Byers, Staff Writer



All photos courtesy of AP Images

Tennessee Titans quarterback Zach Mettenberger (7) kneels on the field after being injured against the New York Giants.



Pittsburgh Steelers running back Le'Veon Bell (26) hit by Cincinnati Bengals free safety Reggie Nelson (20).

Despite domestic violence scandals hovering over the NFL, its TV ratings have continued to excel. This includes all of the NFL's major networks to watch games, which are ESPN, NBC, CBS and FOX. SportsMediaWatch.com has compiled a list of the 50 most-watched sporting events in 2013, and 46 (92 percent) of the events are NFL games, including a whopping 35 regular season games.

What if I told you that the NFL won't be around in 30 years? Although NFL ratings still sit at the top of the charts, the sport is almost becoming too dangerous. Football is a grind-it-out type of sport that could eventually be ground up.

According to nflconcussionlawsuits.com, in August 2013, the NFL agreed to a $765 million settlement in a lawsuit brought by more than 4,500 players and their families. The lawsuit alleged that the NFL concealed what it knew about the dangers of repeated hits to the head. The settlement will include $675 million for families of players who sustained cognitive injury, with as much as $75 million to be set aside for baseline medical exams. A $10 million research fund will also be established.

In 2014 the NFL had 124 concussions reported to the front office. I say 'reported' because who knows how many concussions were not reported. As an athlete, the last thing you want to do is miss a play or a snap especially in the NFL. Players have been known to fail the NFL's concussion test and still continue to play in the game.

As NFL players don't like to miss a snap, the NFL's front office doesn't like to be wrong. They claim that the number of concussions have decreased over the past years. NFL players are more likely now to not tell team doctors that they're having concussion-like symptoms. If you tell your team doctor you have concussion symptoms, you have to go through the concussion test protocol.

"Players are changing the way they're tackling," said Jeff Miller, NFL Senior Vice President of Health and Safety Policy in an article on ESPN.com. "They're changing the way they play the game. "In all, the concussion rate is down to 0.43 per game," Miller said, "You have to play more than two games to get a concussion in the NFL, by those numbers."

With enough concussions causing head trauma you begin to have players getting brain problems. Ex-NFL players have been diagnosed with depression, chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) and dementia. Hall of Fame linebacker Junior Seau, committed suicide after retiring from the NFL in 2010 and was later found out that he was suffering from depression.

Eventually, the NFL will dwindle down. The numbers and safety condition alerts are sufficient enough. Trust me, I love football just as much as the next guy. Regardless of your opinion, you can't argue that the NFL is a dangerous league. Play for the love of the sport I guess.

The Good, The Bad and The Country

Is country music really all that bad?

Story by: Maggie Mackin, Staff Writer

EACH TIME A country song is blared on a radio, an "I hate country music" is bound to be heard. Like each genre of music, country has its ups and downs. Take it from someone who previously detested country music: give it a chance at least once.

Prior to this past summer, I wanted nothing to do with the acoustic-guitar-accented-voice of country music. After listening to a mix-CD featuring "Good Directions" by Billy Currington, my ideas changed. The cliché, truthful lyrics of many country songs generally turned me off of the music, but the more times I listened to "Good Directions," the less I wanted to plug my ears when I heard any country song.

Although many categorize this type of music as repetitive and annoying, country music tells stories in a straightforward way. The simple beats and rhythms of the songs make them incredibly catchy and the simple lyrics can easily stick in your mind.

The ability to listen to country music depends greatly on the personality of the listener. Generally, the country songs that get popular talk about love, which not everyone wants to listen to, therefore making it difficult to find a song interesting. Many

Billy Currington performs at the CMA Music Fest

of these songs sound similar and can easily get old.

More often than not, when someone says that they dislike country music they have never taken the time out to listen to it. Normally, when asked why they hate country music so much, people list two reasons. One, because all the songs sound the same, and two, because they seem incredibly repetitive. But both can easily be said of other types of music. For senior Emma Hartmann, she just can't relate to it.

"Some songs sound the same but others have qualities that set them apart from others," senior Maddie Knight said. "Some have a folk feeling to them while others are love songs or ballads."

Between pop, rock and other types of music, no two voices sound the same. The indistinguishable twang of a country singer's voice sets them apart from the other genres of music.

"There's a whole variety of voices you hear when you listen to it, from deep and soulful to young and mainstream," Knight said, "Johnny Cash had that instantly recognizable sound, only a handful of artists today can be compared to him."

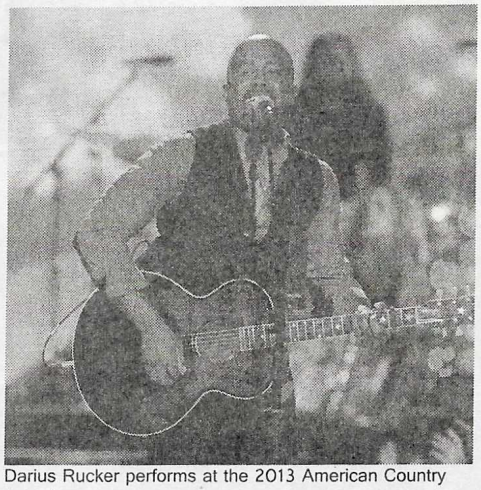
Over the many years that country music has gained popularity, many singers and bands have combined pop or rock music to make a sound like no one has heard before. Artists like Lynyrd Skynyrd bridge the gap between two different genres of music.

"It's cool that they aren't defined by one specific thing and kind of take elements from several genres," Hartmann said.

Country music, a genre not like any other, just isn't for everyone. Various forms of country music exist, some pop-sounding, others remnant of rock music. Listen to different styles and maybe you'll find one you can appreciate.

Luke Bryan performs at the 2014 CMA Music Awards show.

Miranda Lambert performs at the 57th Annual Grammy Awards.

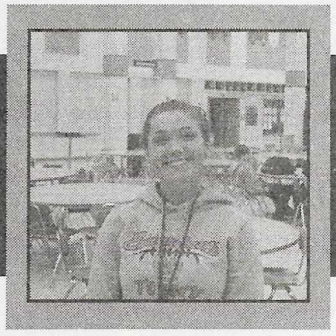

Darius Rucker performs at the 2013 American Country Awards.

Question of the Quarter:

What's something that you're proud of?

"My marriage and the birth of my daughter."

-Mr. Jason Osbourne

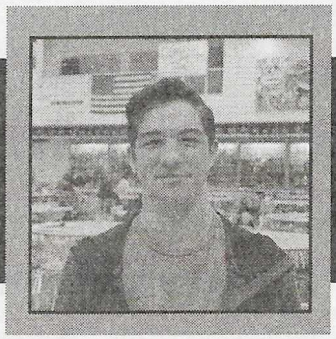


"I got an A+ in chemistry."

-Daniella Romano, senior

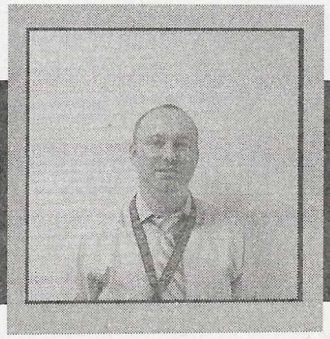
"Proud of myself for starting varsity football."

-Cyrus Ahart, sophomore



"Proud of the athletic department. Year end and year out we compete to be the best."

-Mr. Carry Bailey



"I'm proud of being from Wood River."

-Mr. Adam Tyler

"The Redskins have three Super Bowl wins and the Rams have one."

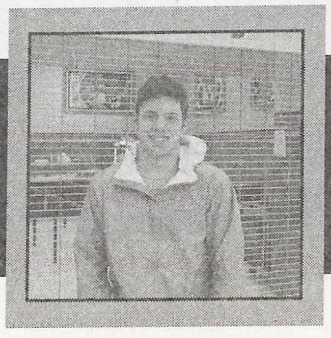
-Joe Ambuel, senior

"I'm proud of me and my friends making our own music."

-Lukas Haag, junior

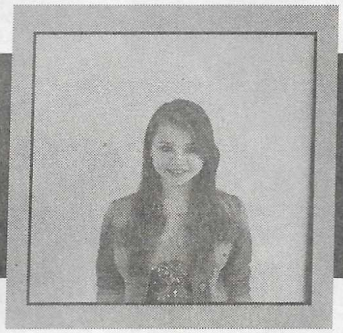
"My swimming ability."

-Jake Gremaud, senior



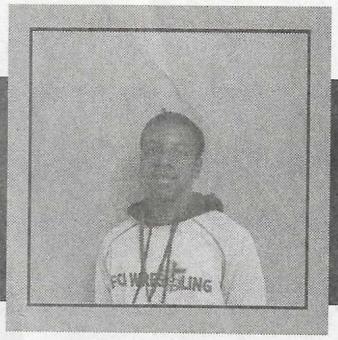
"I'm proud of my country, of myself and of my parents."

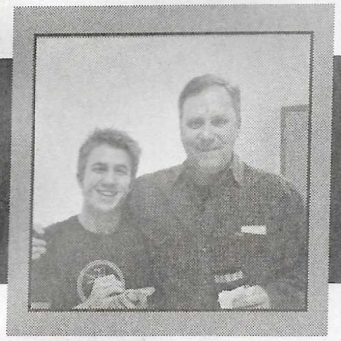
-Masha Kleshchova, sophomore



"I'm proud of being a freshman on the varsity wrestling team."

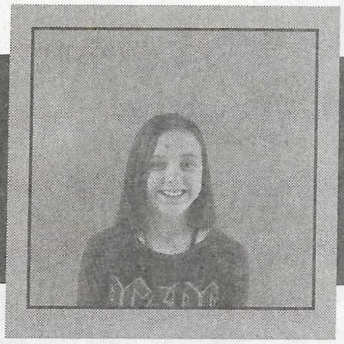
-Jaleen Yancy, freshman





"I'm proud of being among the group of people that started the Mitch n' Friends tennis group."

-Mr. Dave Lipe

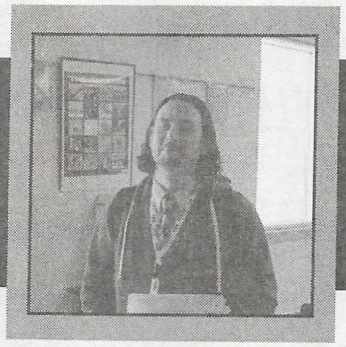


"I'm proud that I can write pretty well."

-Devin Johnson, freshman

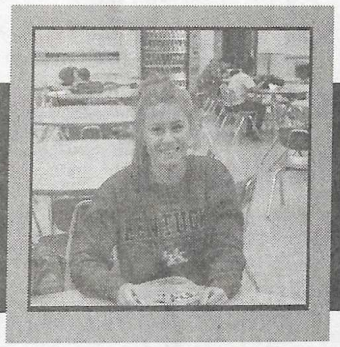
"One time I beat a group of 12 and under kids in a Super Smash Bros tournament."

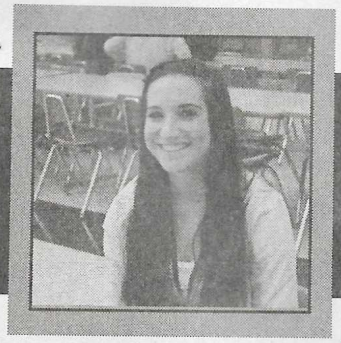
-Mr. John Hursey



"My ability to eat literally anything."

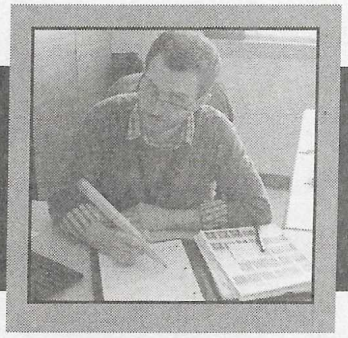
-Olivia Emerson, senior





"Staying true to my goals."

-Emily Cerkoski, senior



"I'm proud of my kid and my family."

-Mr. Daniel McEvilly

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